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Mar. 16, 2013

SANTA FE. New Mexico — Legislation to increase the state minimum wage to \$8.50 is on its way to Gov. Susana Martinez, where it's expected to be vetoed.

The state House voted 37-32 Friday to approve the increase, and the Senate later concurred with House amendments, advancing the measure, Senate Bill 416, to the governor.

But the Governor's Office late Friday warned that the bill would be vetoed because it would make New Mexico less competitive with neighboring states. "The minimum wage increase passed by the Senate only makes it harder to hire New Mexico workers," Martinez spokesman Greg Blair said in a statement.

The higher minimum wage, which would take effect Jan. 1, 2014, would exempt businesses with fewer than 11 employees, workers younger than 18 and agricultural workers. The bill would also allow employers to pay new hires a "training wage" of \$7.50 per hour for their first six months on the job.

"Our state is better-served by investing in human capital, and raising the minimum wage is about reducing inequality, but also it's about restoring the true value of work," said Rep. Miguel Garcia, D-Albuquerque, the House sponsor of the wage increase.

Opponents of the minimum wage increase said the move would hurt the state economy because employers may choose to either increase prices or reduce their workforces to offset increased payroll costs.

House Minority Leader Donald Bratton, R-Hobbs, said the state should instead

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increase the governor said she would approve.

“Let’s not pass a bill that doesn’t get signed and help the workers,” Gentry said. “In my mind, 30 cents is better than nothing.”

That effort failed on 33-33 tie.

The state’s current \$7.50 minimum wage was set in 2009. Since then, voters in Albuquerque and Santa Fe have opted to increase minimum wages to \$10.51 per hour in Santa Fe and \$8.50 per hour in Albuquerque.

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